

A
PRIMER
IN
GRANTHA
CHARACTERS

By K. Venugopalan

A Primer in Grantha Characters

by

K. Venugopalan

Published by

James H. Nye
319 West Swift Street
St. Peter, Minnesota 56082

Price

\$1.50

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Preface

Modern research in Sanskrit requires the ability to read manuscripts in Grantha characters, especially where text editing is concerned. Primers or guides to the Grantha script are not available in many libraries. Those texts which had formerly been available are either out of print or not readily available for sale. I have been approached by many scholars, both Indian and Western, to read manuscripts in Grantha script or transcribe them into Devanāgarī characters. The following is a small attempt to acquaint those scholars required to read Grantha manuscripts or inscriptional material with this script.

Grantha has a very early origin. Its association with the Dravidian scripts, particularly with Tamil, is well known. More details on this topic may be found in books on Indian paleography by A. C. Burnell, G. Bühler, and others.

The written form of a script varies from individual to individual and it is not possible to give all such variations. The idiosyncrasies of a hand must be ascertained from each manuscript. But a scholar who is acquainted with the language and the standard printed form of the characters will find it easy to identify all the variations. Hence I have taken into account only the printed form of the characters.

I hope this will suffice as an introduction to the scholar. Suggestions for correction or improvement will be gratefully received.

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July, 1983

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Vowels

a अ ऋ	u उ ॡ	i इ ऋ	o ओ ॢ
ā आ ॠ	ū ॢ ॣ	ī ॡ ॢ	au औ ॣ
ṛ ॠ ॡ	ṣ ॢ ॣ	e ए ।	ṁ ॥ ०
ṛ ॠ ॡ	ṣ ॢ ॣ	ṣ ॢ ॣ	ṛ ॠ ॡ

Consonants

k क् ३	kh ख् ४	g ग् ५	gh ग् ५	ṅ ङ् ६
c च् ७	ch छ् ८	j ज् ९	jh झ् १०	ñ ञ् ११
ṭ ट् १२	ṭh ठ् १३	ḍ ड् १४	ḍh ढ् १५	n ण् १६
t त् १७	th थ् १८	d द् १९	dh ध् २०	ṇ न् २१
p प् २२	ph फ् २३	b ब् २४	bh भ् २५	m म् २६
y य् २७	r र् २८	l ल् २९	v व् ३०	ś श् ३१
ṣ ष् ३२	s स् ३३	h ह् ३४	ḥ ३५	ḥ ३५

1. This long vowel never, to my knowledge, occurs in literature. Yet it is given for the sake of symmetry in all primers. I have omitted it from the charts of consonant vowel combinations. The short vocalic l is replaced by the consonant @ in many mss. This should be apparent, after practice, with knowledge of Sanskrit.

2. This retroflex bears possible influence from Tamil. It is frequently replaced by @ (ॠ) except in Tantric works where it is a separate बीजमन्त्र.

3. ॥ denotes a consonant without an added vowel. It is equivalent to the virāma in Devanāgarī.

Vowels in combination with consonants have the following forms:

அ	ஈ	-
ஆ	ஆ	- ஈ
இ	இ	- இ
ஊ	ஊ	- ஊ
உ	உ	- உ
஋	஋	- ஋
ௌ	ௌ	- ள
எ	எ	- எ
ஐ	ஐ	- ஐ
ஒ	ஒ	- ஓ
ஔ	ஔ	- ஔ

Combinations of all consonants with all vowels:

	அ ஊ	ஆ ஆ	இ இ	ஊ ஊ	உ உ	஋ ஋	ஔ ஔ	எ எ	ஐ ஐ	ஒ ஒ	ஔ ஔ	ஊ ஊ
க	க	கா	கி	கீ	கா	கி	கூ	கா	கி	கூ	கா	கீ
ங	ங	ஙா	ஙி	ஙீ	ஙா	ஙி	ஙூ	ஙா	ஙி	ஙூ	ஙா	ஙீ
ச	ச	சா	சி	சீ	சா	சி	சூ	சா	சி	சூ	சா	சீ
ஃ	ஃ	ஃா	ஃி	ஃீ	ஃா	ஃி	ஃூ	ஃா	ஃி	ஃூ	ஃா	ஃீ
ஔ	ஔ	ஔா	ஔி	ஔீ	ஔா	ஔி	ஔூ	ஔா	ஔி	ஔூ	ஔா	ஔீ
ஊ	ஊ	ஊா	ஊி	ஊீ	ஊா	ஊி	ஊூ	ஊா	ஊி	ஊூ	ஊா	ஊீ
஋	஋	஋ா	஋ி	஋ீ	஋ா	஋ி	஋ூ	஋ா	஋ி	஋ூ	஋ா	஋ீ
ௌ	ௌ	ௌா	ௌி	ௌீ	ௌா	ௌி	ௌூ	ௌா	ௌி	ௌூ	ௌா	ௌீ

The conjunct consonants, as a rule, are written one above the other. The upper one is the pure consonant and the lower one is pronounced with the required vowel. The vowel sign is written after the conjunct or over the upper one according to the sign. Examples are:

kka	क	as in	cikkarah	चिकणः	चिकुणः
ika	कु	"	jhanikarah	झङ्कारः	झङ्कुणः
kki	कि	"	phakkikā	फक्किा	फक्किा
kbi	बि क्ति	"	bhaktih	भक्तिः	भक्किः
tni	ती	"	patni	पत्नी	पत्ती
stu	सु	"	stutih	स्तुतिः	स्तुतीः
kti	कु	"	bhoktṛnām	भोक्तृणां	भोक्तृणां
śle	श्ले	"	ślesah	श्लेषः	श्लेषः
ṣnu	ष्णु	"	viṣṇuh	विष्णुः	विष्णुः
ṣni	ष्णि	"	vṛṣṇih	वृष्णिः	वृष्णिः
hni	हि	"	vahnih	वाहिः	वाहिः
lli	लि	"	mallikā	मल्लिका	मल्लिका
ṣte	ष्टे	"	kaṣṭhena	कष्टेन	कष्टेन
ṣtā	ष्टा	"	sāṣṭāṅgam	साष्टाङ्गम्	साष्टाङ्गम्

Some consonants change shape in conjuncts giving the conjuncts a special combined form. Following are all such forms:

jñ	ज्ञ	as in	yajñah jñānam	यज्ञः ज्ञानम्	यञ्ज्ञः ज्ञानञ्
ñc	ञ्य	"	pañca	पञ्च	पञ्चञ्
ñj	ञ्ज	"	pañjarah	पञ्जरः	पञ्जराञ्
tth	त्थ	"	utthitah	उत्थितः	उत्थितः
tv	त्वं	"	gatvā	गत्वा	गत्वाञ्
ddh	द्ध	"	buddhiḥ	बुद्धिः	बुद्धिः
			suddhiḥ	सुद्धिः	सुद्धिः
dv	द्व	"	drīḥ dvedhā	द्विः द्वेधा	द्विः द्वेधाञ्
nt	न्त	"	sāntah kuntī	शान्तः कुन्ती	शान्तः कुन्तीञ्
nth	न्थ	"	panthāḥ	पन्थाः	पन्थाः
nd	न्द	"	vindati	विन्दति	विन्दति
			vanditah	वन्दितः	वन्दितः
ndh	न्ध	"	bandhah bandhuh	बन्धः बन्धुः	बन्धः बन्धुः

The consonant ऋ (ॠ, ॡ) is represented in two ways. When following a consonant it is written as ऋ under the consonant; but when it precedes a consonant it takes the form ॠ written after the consonant or conjunct.

kr	कृ	as in	krandati kvāntiḥ krīṇāti	क्रन्दति क्रान्तिः क्रीणाति	क्रुन्दि क्रुन्तिः क्रीणादि
tv	तृ	as in	tvāsaḥ	त्रासः	त्रुन्ः
str	सृ	as in	strī	स्त्री	स्रु
ndr	न्दृ	"	candraḥ	चन्द्रः	चद्रुः
ntv	न्तृ	"	mantrah tantri	मन्त्रः तन्त्री	मन्त्रुः तन्त्रु
			BUT		
rk	र्क	"	arkaḥ	अर्कः	अर्कः
re	र्च	"	arca arciḥ	अर्चा अर्चिः	अर्चा अर्चिः
rts	र्त्स	"	bhartsitaḥ	भर्त्सितः	भर्त्सितः
ryā	र्या	"	panyāptam	पर्याप्तम्	पर्याप्तम्
rdhv	र्ध्व	"	ūrdhvam ardham	ऊर्ध्वम् अर्धम्	ऊर्ध्वम् अर्धम्

1. In many cases (both in print and mss.) a ळ (dḥ, ध्व) is replaced by दृ (ddh, द्ध). Other examples are:

ध्रुवम् - दृवम् ; अध्यायः - अदृयः

The consonant ് (y, യ) is represented in conjuncts by the symbol ് only when it is the final member. But when the conjunct contains an initial റ (r, ര), ് (r) takes the last place.

ky	ക്യ	as in	s'akyaḥ	ഇക്യ :	ഈ ക്യേ:
cy	ച്യ	as in	prācyah	പ്രാച്യ:	പ്രാ ച്യേ:
ty	ത്യ	as in	āgatyā	ആഗത്യ	ആ ഗത്യേ
jy	ജ്യ	as in	ijyā	ഇജ്യാ	ഇ ജ്യോ
rjy	ജ്യ	as in	nirmārjya	നിമർജ്യ	നിമർജ്ജോ
ny	ന്യ	as in	nirvāṇya	നിർവ്വണ്യ	നിർവ്വണ്ണോ
rtsy	ർത്സ്യ	as in	vibhartsya	വിഭർത്സ്യ	വിഭർത്സ്യോ
rthy	രത്ത്യാ	as in	prārthya	പ്രാർത്ഥ്യ	പ്രാർത്ഥ്യോ
rtsy	ർത്സ്യ	as in	kāṛtsnyam	കാർത്സ്യം	കാർത്സ്യം
yy	യ്യ	as in	nicyāya	നിചായ്യ	നിചായ്യോ
gny	ഗ്ന്യ	as in	agnyādihānam	അഗ്ന്യാധാനം	അഗ്ന്യാധാനം
vy	വ്യ	as in	vāyuvagnē	വാഖവഗ്നീ	വാഖവഗ്നീ

The final க (ṭ, ṇ) is written as க and the final க (ṇ, ṇ) as க. Normally this will be at the end of the sentence but in print and mss. it is found in the middle of sentences as well as in combinations. This can be easily recognized. Examples are:

tasmāt	தஸ்மாத்	தஸ்மா கி
utkṣīpya	உக்ஷிப்ய	உக்ஷிப்ய
samvatsare	சंवत्सरे	ஸவத்ஸரே
utpādya	उत्पाद्य	உத்பாடிய
avocan	अवोचन्	அவொயந்
trīn kramān	त्रीन् क्रमान्	த்ரீந் க்ரமான்
bhagvān bodhā- yanaḥ	भगवान् बोधा- यनः	ஹ்ருவான் ஸொயந க;

The final ஐ is written as ஐ and the medial anusvāra as a o. Anusvāra occasionally replaces the nasals except அ.

maikhaḥ	मैकुः	மேஐ: ஸ 'ஐ ஐ:
kanthah	कण्ठः	கண: ஸ கஐ:
sambhuh	शंभुः	ஸஹ: ஸ ஸஐ:
bandhaḥ	बन्धः	ஸஹ: ஸ ஸஐ:
pāṇiyam	पानीयम्	பாநீயம்
jalam	जलम्	ஜலம்
kūlam	कूलम्	கூலம்

In conjuncts with more than two consonants, when any two have a combined form, it is always written as such.

ktv	क्त्वं	as in	paktvā	पक्त्वा } पक्त्वा }	पक्त्वा
ndr	न्द्र	as in	landrah	चन्द्रः	चन्द्रः
ndv	न्द्व	as in	dvandvah	द्वन्द्वः	द्वन्द्वः
ntv	न्त्र	as in	tātrikah	तान्त्रिकः	तान्त्रिकः
ndy	न्द्य	as in	vandyah	वन्द्यः	वन्द्यः
nty	न्त्य	as in	bhrāntyā	भ्रान्त्या	भ्रान्त्या

Important

Care should be taken to distinguish the following pairs, particularly while reading manuscripts:

- ॒ (u, उ) and ॒ (d, ढ)
 ॒ (p, प) and ॒ (v, व)
 ॒ (p, प) and ॒ (c, च)
 ॒ (ph, फ) and ॒ (ch, छ)
 ॒ (y, य) and ॒ (dh, ध)
 ॒ (v, व) and ॒ (kh, ख)
 ॒ (u, उ) and ॒ (o, ओ)
 ॒ (d, ढ) and ॒ (o, ओ)
 ॒ (anusvāra) and ॒ (t, ठ)
 ॒ (i, इ) and ॒ (ñ, ण)

Words without conjuncts:

abhayaṃ	अभयम्	கவியபி
āyāḥ	आयः	சூய :
īyam	इयम्	ஐயபி
ītiḥ	इति :	இதி :
uragāḥ	उरगः	உரகு :
upadhā	उपधा	உபயா
ūṣarā	ऊजरा	உஷரநா
ṛṇam	ऋणम्	ஐணநி
ṛkārah	ऋकारः	ஐகார :
ṣaḥ	एषः	ஷஷ :
airāvataḥ	ऐरावतः	அரைவகு :
oḡhaḥ	ओषः	ஔஷ :
ausadham	औषधम्	ஔஷயபி
kapiḥ	कपिः	கபி :
khagāḥ	खगः	பகு :
gūḍham	गूढम्	குகுடி
ghanaḥ	घनः	பந :
catūlam	चटुलम्	அபுலு
Chalāḥ	छलः	அல :
jīvanam, jalam	जीवनम्, जलम्	ஜீவநு , ஜலநி
jharī	झरी	ஜரீ
ṭikā	टीका	டீகா
ṭhālīnī	ठालिनी	஠ாலீநி
ḍamaruḥ	डमरुः	டமர :
dhaṅkanam	ढौकनम्	டௌகநு
ṭaulikāḥ	नौलिकः	தளலிக :

dipah
 dhisanah
 nirodhaḥ
 paisācaḥ
 phāṇitam
 bijah
 bhūtiḥ
 bhavān
 mithunam
 yonih
 rohinī
 līlā
 vairī
 sāmī
 śaḍānanah
 saudhāminī
 hīrah
 pātālah
 pulinam
 vapanam
 viparītaḥ
 vivaraṇam
 pavamānah
 ilā
 kālanam
 dalaṁ
 śabalaṁ
 yodhaḥ

दीपः
 धिषणः
 निरोधः
 पैसाचः
 फाणितम्
 बीजः
 भीतिः
 भवान्
 मिथुनम्
 योनिः
 रोहिणी
 लीला
 वैरी
 हामी
 षडाननः
 सौधामिनी
 हीरः
 पाताकः
 पुत्तिनम्
 वपनम्
 विपरीतः
 विवरणम्
 पवमानः
 इला
 कालनम्
 दलम्
 शबलम्
 योधः

दीपः
 யிஷணः
 நிரோധः
 பைசாசு
 ஷாணிதது
 பீஜம்
 ஸீதி:
 ஸ்வாந்
 ஜிமூநது
 யோநி:
 ரோஹிணி
 லீலா
 வைரீ
 ஸாமி
 ஷடானந:
 ஸௌயாஜிதீ
 ஹீர:
 பாதாஹ:
 புலினம்
 வபநது
 விபரீத:
 விவரணது
 பவமந:
 இலா
 காலநது
 டலம்
 ஸபலம்
 யோய:

Words with conjuncts:

añcitah	आञ्चितः	கஞ்சித :
kuñjarah	कुञ्जरः	கஞ்ஜர :
ākarsanam	आकर्षणम्	கஞ் க ள் ள் ள் ள்
agnih	आग्निः	கஞ் ஸ்ரி :
ātmā	आत्मा	கஞ் த்ரா
pingalah	पिङ्गलः	பி ங் ள் ள் :
kundalam	कुण्डलम्	கஞ் ட் ள் ள் (கா)
tāmbūlam	ताम्बूलम्	தாம்பூ ள் ள்
induh	इन्दुः	ஐ ன் டு :
vijñānam	विज्ञानम्	வி ங் ள் ள் ள் ள்
śrutvā	श्रुत्वा	ஸ்ருத்வா
indrāṇi	इन्द्राणी	ஐ ன் ட்ரா ணி
danti	दन्ती	த ன் ள்
pārthivah	पार्थिवः	பா ர் தி வ் :
kārṣṇyam	कार्श्यम्	கா ள் ள் ள் ள்
pārṣṇih	पार्ष्णिः	பா ள் ள் ள் ள் :
kaśmīn'scit	कस्मिंश्चित्	க ள் ள் ள் ள் ள் ள் (க ள் ள்)
dhārṣṭyam	धाष्यम्	யா ள் ள் ள் ள் ள்
karpūrah	कर्पूरः	க ர்ப் ள் ள் ள் :
parvan	पर्वन्	ப ர் வ ள்
bandhūkah	बन्धूकः	ப ன் டு ள் ள் :
vandyaḥ	वन्द्यः	வ ன் டு :
ucchritam	उच्छ्रितम्	உ ள் ள் ள் ள் ள்
dāridryam	दारिद्र्यम्	தா ரி ட் ட் ள் ள்
pārśvam	पार्श्वम्	பா ள் ள் ள் ள்
dhairyam	धैर्यम्	தெய்வ ள் ள் (தெய்)
chandas	छन्दस्	ச ன் ட் ள் (ச ன் ட் ள்)
udarah	उदरः	உ ட் ள் :

[illegible]

ஸ்ரீ யா நு வு யோ ஹு ஸ்ரீ ஜாநய ஜூ : வரதாப |
 ஸவது ஸ்ரீ ஜாநி அம் வரயது ஸ்ரீ ஜாந வரிஸகோவது |
 கஜிநி புணரிவரதாந வரிபு ஸ்ரீந ஸவயா |
 உவரெகிஷ்டுநி நத ஸ்ரீநம் ஸ்ரீநிந ஸக உயரிந : ||
 யஜாநவாந வரதஜெஹ ஹ ஜெவம் யாஸுஸிவானவ
 யெந ஸ்ரீ வரதாநு ஸா ஜெண பு கிஷ்டுஸுநுயோ சயி |

உண ஐயி சேவிம சய பூரா பெ சே பூ க்கும் பூராஹு நவ்யயி
உகதாஹி யஸ்ய பண்பாதி யஸ்தம் வெடி ஸ வெடிவிஃ
சுய பூரா ஐயிம் பூஸ்யதாஸ்ய ஸ்ய பரா பொ
முண பூஷா பீரா விஷய பூஷா பொ : |
சுய பூ சேவிம நுநு ஸகதாதி
சேவிம நு ஸகதீதி சேநுஷுமொ கை ||.

{ Brahmāsūtra Sāṅkara bhāṣyāṭam bhūh }

Note

The avagraha (§) is indicated by Z in most of the printed books. Generally in the handwritten mss. the avagraha is not indicated. The reader knowing the language should be able to identify the places where it occurs.